

I am writing in response to the proposed bill that would require School Social Workers to conduct home visits on each student on their caseload during the school year. As a School Social Worker for the past 15 years, I OPPOSE this bill and this requirement. I proudly work at Norwich Free Academy (NFA) and am assigned to the 11th grade students at my school, as well as the students in a special education program that serves multi-grade levels. There are currently 544 students in the 11th grade at NFA and I am the only School Social Worker assigned to this grade level. How would my caseload be determined for home visits? How could I be expected to provide IEP counseling services (which are legally mandated in an IEP), crisis counseling services, case management of 504 students, attendance interventions, referrals to community providers, and data collection in all of these areas if I am doing home visits? My school is a regional school that serves over 8 sending towns; some homes are over 30 minutes away from the school therefore home visits are not a quick endeavor.

As a former Social Worker for the Department of Children and Families (DCF), I am no stranger to conducting home visits and I believe in their value. I do not believe in a mandate for home visits by school Social Workers; however, when I am being asked to use my personal vehicle, the visits are not only for those who would benefit the most, and my professional discretion in making home visit decisions is being overlooked. At a time when even DCF Social Workers are not going into the homes of clients, this bill appears to be yet another way to make schools responsible for ALL aspects of the well-being of our state's children. If we learned anything during the pandemic closure, it is that we have made our state's schools the panacea for everything that children need (food, mental health, exercise, medical attention, etc). We have to stop doing that! Please vote NO on this bill!

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